



Who knows the orphan, knows the widow,
Knows the oppression of man over man,
 is the orphan's mother?
Nanshe, who cares for the widow,
Who seeks out justice for the poorest,
The queen brings the refugee to her lap,
Finds shelter for the weak.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

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AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY OF ENDEMIC TYPHUS (BRILL'S DISEASE) IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS MODE OF TRANSMISSION

By KENNETH F. MAXCY, Passed Assistant Surgeon, United States Public Health Service

At the beginning of this century it was generally held that typhus fever had disappeared from the United States except for an occasional case imported from Europe or from Mexico.¹

In 1910 Dr. Nathan E. Brill (1898, 1910, 1911), of New York, called attention to a typhuslike disease occurring endemically in that city. He hesitated to identify it as typhus because of its generally milder course and its occurrence under circumstances different from those usually associated with that disease. He accordingly believed that he was dealing with a new clinical entity, "an infectious disease of unknown etiology." Cases of this type have since been known in the United States as Brill's disease.

In 1912 Anderson and Goldberger, who had previously reported on the experimental transmission of Mexican typhus ("tabardillo") to monkeys, were similarly successful in the inoculation of a Rhesus monkey with blood from a case of Brill's disease in New York. They found that, as in "tabardillo," one infection rendered monkeys immune to subsequent inoculations of the same passage virus. Furthermore, monkeys previously infected with Mexican typhus were thereafter found immune to Brill's disease, and vice versa. From these observations they concluded that Brill's disease was, in fact, identical with typhus fever, and this conclusion seems to have been quite promptly and generally accepted.

¹ August Hirsch, in his "Geographical and Historical Pathology" (Pub. by the New Sydenham Society, London, 1883), states that:

The proper era of typhus for the United States and Canada begins with the period when immigration from Ireland had set in on a large scale. We thus explain the fact that the ports on the east coast of North America have been the headquarters of the disease, and that the largest contingent of the sick has been supplied by the immigrants themselves, or their countrymen with whom they had come in contact. On the other hand, it is a noteworthy fact that the most careful search among the plentiful epidemiologic records in the literature of the United States fails to discover a single statement as to the occurrence of typhus in the Mississippi Valley or in the Western States, so that the greater part of the continent appears

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A systematic and thorough account by Dr. Kenneth F. Maxcy of a study of Brill's disease in southern Alabama and Savannah, Ga., confirms its endemic character and points out differences in epidemiological characteristics from those of typhus in the "Old World."